



Attention: Boaters!

Alabama boaters should be aware of and follow current marine sanitation laws

By Erica Shipman, Alabama Marine Police

Alabama's favorable weather conditions and abundant waterways mean that boating is a popular activity across the state. With over 1 million boaters enjoying Alabama's 1 million acres of lakes, 1,600 miles of rivers and 53 miles of coastline each year, comes a growing concern for clean water and other environmental issues, such as marine sewage and litter disposal.

Marine Sanitation Act

To combat these health and environmental problems, the Alabama Legislature passed Marine Sanitation Act 2002-59, which became effective in 2003. This Act regulates sewage discharge from recreational vessels and residence boats. The following is a synopsis of the Act:

- Portable toilets are prohibited from dumping raw sewage into any state waters.
- Discharge of untreated sewage is prohibited on all state waters. Gray water (galley water, bath and shower water, and bilge water) is exempt.
- All recreational vessels and residence boats with marine sanitation devices must be inspected annually by a Marine Police officer or other Department of Conservation employee. A compliance decal is issued if vessel meets the requirements of the Act and the Department.
- All marine sanitation devices must meet the U.S. Coast Guard and Environmental Protection Agency standards.
- Boats with holding tanks (Type III marine sanitation device) cannot moor, anchor, dock or be stored at marinas without pump-out facilities, except in a safety emergency.
- Marine Police officers or any duly sworn peace officer may board and inspect for compliance if there is probable cause to believe that a violation of this act or departmental rules has occurred. First time offenders will receive a warning and will have 90 days to come into compliance. Conviction of this Act will result in a minimum fine of \$100 up to a maximum fine of \$1,000

Following are the three types of marine sanitation devices:

USCG Type I: Generally a flow-through device that uses maceration and chemical treatment to kill bacteria prior to discharge.

USCG Type II: Generally a flow-through device that uses maceration, septic, and chemical treatment to kill bacteria prior to discharge.

USCG Type III: Prevents the discharge of sewage as sewage goes to a holding tank. The tank is later emptied by utilizing an on-shore, certified pump-out station.

NOTE: Under the Federal Clean Water Act, completely enclosed fresh-water lakes, reservoirs, and impoundments with no inlet or outlet for vessel traffic, and rivers not capable of interstate navigation are considered no discharge zones. In a no discharge zone, sewage discharge, whether treated or untreated, is prohibited. Type I and Type II marine sanitation devices are illegal to use in a no discharge zone unless sewage flows directly to a holding tank or the device is secured in such a way that it cannot be used.

Alabama's no discharge zones include the following bodies of water and any others that meet the federal guidelines:

- Smith Lake
- All lakes on the Tallapoosa River System
- All lakes on the Coosa River System with the exception of Weiss Lake

Marine Police officers conduct inspections of marine sanitation devices on a regular basis at marinas statewide. For a schedule of inspection sites, dates, and times, visit www.outdooralabama.com and click on "Boating."

If you do not have access to the Internet, you may contact a Marine Police district office or the Montgomery headquarters at the following telephone numbers:

District I: located on Lake Guntersville; services Tennessee River system and adjoining lakes; 1-888-903-7659

District II: located on Logan Martin Lake; services Coosa, Warrior, and upper Tallapoosa river systems and adjoining lakes; 1-800-499-1667

District III: located on Lake Martin; services Tallapoosa, Coosa, Chattahoochee and Alabama river system and adjoining lakes; 1-800-432-7389

District IV: located at Perdido Pass, Orange Beach; services coastal waters, Mobile, Warrior, Tensaw, Tombigbee river systems and Mobile Delta; 1-888-903-2583

Montgomery Headquarters: 1-800-272-7930

US COAST GUARD

Some Boats Banned on Three Lakes